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ABSTRACT

The processes of educational leadership are educative when they both educate constituents and are informed by feedback from constituents; when they are conducted as an ongoing exercise of participatory problem solving. In short, educational leadership is educational when both its ends and its means are educative. John Dewey provided a theoretical rationale for this condition of educational leadership, and recent research provides evidence to suggest that when school leaders employ participative forms of decision making, schools are more likely to achieve their educational purposes. Recently, the educational leadership field has begun to give increasing credence to the central importance of educational dimensions of the school administrator's work. For example, during the last two decades, commitment to a managerial focus on the administration of school has begun to yield to a new conception of educational leadership, which abandons top-down decision making in favor of collaborative approaches to problem solving which recognize the central importance of curriculum and instruction in the life of the school. The paper recommends that educational leadership preparation programs revise their curricula and redirect resources to equip prospective leaders with the capacities to lead in this manner. (Contains 24 references.) (SM)

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WHAT MAKES EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP "EDUCATIONAL"?

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What makes educational leadership "educational"? What distinguishes educational leadership from generic leadership? from leadership in other areas of endeavor? The obviousness of these questions--and their answers--obscures their importance. For if educational leadership cannot credibly be distinguished from other forms of leadership, say, business leadership or military leadership, then colleges of education and departments of educational leadership have no special claim on the preparation of educational leaders. The retired corporate CEOs and retreaded military officers increasingly touted by politicians and policy makers may as well take charge of our schools. What, then, makes educational leadership "educational"?

A typical response to the question-at-hand goes something like this: Educational leadership is educational because it happens in educational settings. Educational settings manifest unique characteristics that other settings lack, such as a concentrated population of children and youth, a specific set of laws, special accounting practices. A familiarity with such characteristics and settings is necessary for an educational leader to be effective. Thus, the argument goes, prospective educational leaders should have knowledge of educational settings, acquired through first hand professional experience and/or through special training that introduces them to the realities of educational settings. Although reasonable on the face of it, this response to our question remains inadequate. Its inadequacy is

manifest in conventional educational practice and conventional educational leadership preparation programs.

Both educational leadership preparation programs and educational leadership practice typically focus on the managerial exigencies of schooling (Murphy, 1990; McCarthy, 1999). School administrators spend most of their time attending to tasks such as assuring that the buses run on time, that classrooms contain a sufficient number of desks, that corridors are clean and shiny, that restrooms are sanitary and supplied with the necessary amenities, that lunch is served on time, that the building is safe and orderly. Yet, while for the school leader these tasks happen in educational settings, most of them are not unique to educational settings.

Unquestionably, these tasks are essential to the operation of a school. Indeed, these tasks are avoided at the school leader's peril. Educational leadership programs should prepare prospective leaders to dispatch them well. Yet, although these tasks are necessary, they are insufficient for true educational leadership. For such tasks fail to focus expressly on the special function of the institution of schooling, that is, to teach students a curriculum worth learning. Consequently, the fact that educational leadership happens in educational settings and even the reality that educational settings manifest unique characteristics do not necessarily make the leadership practiced there "educational." Rather, it is a focus on the definitive functions of schooling that makes educational leadership educational. The educational function of the institution of schooling is that institution's most unique characteristic, but

paradoxically, apparently the characteristic most neglected in leadership preparation programs and in practice. For leadership to be truly educational, it must embrace definitive educational matters as its priorities.

Two conditions, then, make educational leadership educational. Educational leadership is educational when 1) its processes are focused on fostering student learning of a worthwhile curriculum, and 2) the processes of fostering student learning are themselves approached as educational processes. In short, educational leadership is educational when both its ends and means are educative.

The Ends of Educational Leadership

During the last 15 years, much has been proposed for reforming educational leadership (e.g., Murphy, 1993). In an attempt to obtain a fresh perspective on this matter, let us turn to one of the greatest educational leaders in recent history, John Dewey. As we know, Dewey served briefly as a school principal in Pennsylvania before entering academia and eventually directing the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago. Thus, perhaps unlike many professors of educational leadership today, Dewey had enjoyed actual experience as an administrator. Dewey's interests in education ranged widely; it should come as little surprise, then, that he wrote two papers about educational leadership, both published during the 1930s and both largely forgotten today.

In an article entitled "Toward Administrative Statesmanship," published in 1935 in the journal The Social Frontier, Dewey (1991/1935) identified three phases of the administrator's work. The "intellectual-professional" phase comprised the "special

intellectual responsibilities" of "laying out, in a good deal of detail, the whole scheme of the curriculum and promulgating methods to be followed" (p. 345). That is, the intellectual phase of administrative work involved the uniquely educational matters of curriculum development and instructional improvement. The "personal relations" phase comprised fostering cooperative relations among a wide array of constituents that included teachers, school board members, parents, other taxpayers, and politicians. The "detail and routine" phase comprised what today we refer to as "administrivia." Significantly, Dewey warned that various factors--including the size of a school system and the "powerful influence of business standards and measures" (p. 346)--create "the danger that [the administrator] will become so immersed in this phase of his [or her] work, that the other two phases" will be "submerged" (p. 346). For Dewey, the neglect of the educational phase could be avoided and the integration of the three necessary phases achieved by having "a definitive idea of the place and function of the school in the ongoing processes of society" (p. 346)--what we today would refer to as having a vision. Dewey identified three steps to achieve the desired integration of the three phases: deciding whether the school's function is to maintain the status quo or to improve society (he opted for the latter); conducting the "school itself as a cooperative community" (p. 347) and; realizing "that public education is essentially education <u>of</u> the public" (p. 347)--education not only of students but of all constituents in the school community.

Dewey's perspective on educational leadership--he used the

term Educational Statesmanship--holds much relevance today. School leadership preparation programs and conventional administrative practice can still benefit from Dewey's caution; as noted, research suggests that administrators devote relatively little of their time--as little as 5% but no more than 20% by one estimate--to the "intellectual-professional" phase of their work, that is to curriculum and instruction (Murphy, 1990). Because of the complexity of administering schools, the unique function of the school is often obscured by the realities of the administrator's job (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990). Similarly, preparation programs typically focus on managerial and human relations dimensions of the job at the neglect of curriculum and instruction (McCarthy, 1999). When instruction is considered, it is usually in terms of teacher evaluation, not instructional improvement or student learning.

A simple appeal to Dewey's authority, of course, provides insufficient grounds to support the claim that educational leadership should focus on matters of teaching students a curriculum worth learning. At least three other realities, however, corroborate this claim. The first and most obvious of these realities is the sheer fact that the unique function of the institution of schooling is to teach students a curriculum worth learning. Not only should the unique function of the institution drive everything a school leader does, but it should be the priority of the leader's job. Second, ample evidence exists to suggest that when school leaders, especially principals, in fact focus on the school's unique function, student learning improves (Boyer, 1983; Eberts & Stone, 1988; Murphy, 1990). Moreover,

some evidence exists to suggest that not only does a focus on educational matters (i.e., curriculum and instruction) contribute to an improvement in student achievement, but also that attention to non-instructional tasks has no appreciable impact on student learning (Eberts & Stone, 1988, p. 298). These realities should be grounds enough for focusing educational leadership on educational matters. Yet, as noted, historically this has not been the case. A third contemporary reality, however, has served as something of a wake-up call to the educational leadership community.

For all of its false assumptions and problematic proposals, the current education reform movement has focused the attention of policy makers, politicians, the public, and the school leadership field on the central importance of student learning, albeit narrowly conceived as achievement test scores. Recent attention to leadership programs from politicians and policy makers has emphasized the role of school administrators in improving student achievement (Murphy, 1990; McCarthy, 1999; Olson, 2000; Guthrie & Sanders, 2001). Because we educators should know better, this reminder is somewhat embarrassing coming as it does from non-educators. Of course, no education reform movement is without its ironies. Thus, at the very time when the crucial educational dimensions of the work of the school leader are recognized, calls also arise for staffing leadership positions with non-educators whose strong suit is management, not educational skills.

Finally, and this would be a fourth ground, the imperative for focusing school leaders on the educational dimension of their work is heightened by the demands of the emerging information

economy that rote, low cognitive modes of teaching yield to the development of higher-order intellectual and interpersonal skills among the rising generation. Principals must not only possess such skills, but also the capacity to promote them among students.

In summary then, educational leadership preparation programs should focus on preparing leaders who will shift their emphasis from institutional maintenance to educational improvement, who will focus their energies on achieving the educational mission of schools. The business of schooling is to teach students a worthwhile curriculum. True educational leadership, then, has as its priority the educational mission or ends of the institution of the school. In order to retain currency with their constituents, but also importantly and realistically to recognize and optimize the special function of the institution of the school, educational leadership programs should focus anew on the educational dimensions of the school leader's job. The administration of managerial imperatives is a necessary, but no longer sufficient dimension of genuine <u>educational</u> leadership. School leaders must possess the capacities to marshal professional, technical, community, and material resources to improve learning for all students, learning of an intellectual caliber that provides students not only the skills marketable in the emerging information economy, but also with capacities to act as the fourth branch of our democratic republic.

<u>The Means of Educational Leadership</u>

This brings us to the second condition that makes educational leadership educational, the assertion that the means or processes of educational leadership should themselves be educational. Dewey

broached this matter in his conceptualization of the Educational Statesman, whose role it was to

> conceive adult education to be a necessary part of his job, not in the sense of providing adult classes and lectures--as helpful as these may be--but in the sense that only as the public is brought to understand the needs and possibilities of the creative education of the young, can such education be vitally effective. He will realize that public education is essentially education <u>of</u> the public: directly, through teachers and students in the school; indirectly through communicating to others his own ideals and standards, inspiring others with the enthusiasm of himself and his staff for the function of intelligence and character in the transformation of society. (Dewey, 1991/1935, p. 347)

The educational leader bears the responsibility to educate the public about the effective education of children and youth. Educational leadership thus does not stop at the schoolhouse door, it extends to the whole community. Additionally, however, for Dewey educational leadership was educational because the leader remained open to informing his or her decision-making with input from the school community.

In another little-known essay entitled, "Democracy and Educational Administration," which he first delivered as a speech to the General Session of the National Education Association's Department of the Superintendency on February 22, 1937 in New Orleans, Dewey (1991/1937) articulated the relationship between educational administration and democratic theory. He asserted that democracy is necessarily more than simply a form of

government, that democracy is a way of life that requires the participation of all of its members. Dewey also observed that democracy is often associated merely with freedom of action. He insisted, however, that freedom of action is another necessary but insufficient condition for democracy. As he put it, "Unless freedom of action [is guided by] intelligence, its manifestation is almost sure to result in confusion and disorder" (p. 220). For Dewey, more fundamental than freedom of action was a democratic commitment to freedom of intelligence. The foundation of democracy is "faith in human intelligence, and in the power of pooled and cooperative experience" (p. 219). Only as citizens are able to engage in the free and open exchange of ideas and information can cooperative problem solving flourish.

Dewey noted that authoritarian forms of government are based upon the belief that the intelligence needed for leadership was enjoyed by only a select, superior few members of society. Dewey (1991/1937) argued that democracy is premised on the idea that no select group possesses sufficient wisdom to rule others without their consent. He maintained that "it is the democratic faith that [intelligence] is sufficiently general so that each individual has something to contribute [the value of which] can be assessed only as it enters into the final pooled intelligence constituted by the contributions of all" (p. 220). That is, equality means that each individual has the right to have input to the resolution of common problems. While not all of such input will actually solve any particular problem, the combination of ideas from all individuals will result in greater quantity and quality of ideas to choose from and increase the likelihood that

problems will be resolved.

After providing this synopsis of his theory of democracy, Dewey (1991/1937) examined its implications for educational administration. He noted that essentially, "all institutions are educational in the sense that they operate to form . . . attitudes, dispositions, and disabilities" in their members (p. 221). He suggested that for the school, given its express educational function, this "principle applies with special force" (p. 222). He concluded, then, that "the democratic principle requires that every teacher should have some regular and organic way in which he can, directly or through representatives democratically chosen, participate in the formation of the controlling aims, methods, and materials of the school of which he is part" (p. 222).

After illustrating the negative effects of undemocratic forms of school administration, Dewey (1991/1937) perhaps appeased his audience from the Department of Superintendence with the suggestion, "I would not compare administrators to political autocrats. On the whole, what exists in the schools is more a matter of habit and custom than it is of any deliberate autocracy" (p. 224). He continued, however, by pointing to the "waste" that results from the general failure to pass on effective teaching methods from teacher to teacher. Dewey posed the rhetorical question, "Is not the waste very considerably increased when teachers are not called upon to communicate their successful methods and results in a form in which it could have organic effect upon general school policies?" He continued, "Add to this waste that results when teachers are called upon to give effect in

the classroom to courses of study they do not understand the reasons for, and the total loss mounts up so that it is a fair estimate that the absence of democratic methods is the greatest single cause of educational waste" (p. 224).

In summary then, for Dewey the Educational Statesman not only approached the role of the school administrator as one of educating all constituents about effective education, but also as one of drawing from the pooled experience and intelligence of the faculty in solving problems and improving the educational program. Dewey's conception of the educational leader, of course, resonates with central tenets of his philosophy, that is, that growth--or "continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming" or flexible readjustment" of experience--comprises both the ends and means of life, of education, and of democracy (Dewey, 1966/1916, pp. 49-50, 99). When making decisions, the school leader should be open to learning something from those who live close to the problems to be solved, teachers. Although Dewey spoke only of teachers in his essay, today we would likely extend opportunities to contribute to the resolution of educational problems to all members of the school community. Again, however, a simple appeal to Dewey's authority, of course, provides insufficient grounds to support the claim that educational leadership involves participatory forms of leadership. At least four grounds support this claim.

First, fundamentally if the way we operate schools is to be consistent with the ideals of our society, the processes of educational leadership should be approached as democratically as possible. This implies neither that all decisions are made by group consensus, nor that the educational leader surrenders his or

her authority on all matters. Some matters, such as personnel issues, are legally confidential and thereby cannot be treated publicly. The wise educational leader, however, entertains input from a wide a range of sources as feasible. Second, recent calls for wider parental and community involvement in school reform efforts underscore the reality that schools are public institutions in which the public has a stake and, it follows, in which the public should have a voice. Third, arguably something of a professional obligation exists to educate the public about what has been demonstrated as educationally sound practice. As Laurel Tanner puts it, "A profession has to have something to say about policy; otherwise it is not a profession" (Tanner, 1988, p. 3).

Finally, evidence exists to suggest that participatory forms of leadership are associated with achieving institutional goals, including those of schools. Likert, for example, found that the more participative the system of organization, the more successful the organization was at achieving its purposes (Bowers, 1977). Research on educational reform and school renewal efforts similarly point toward the efficacy of participatory forms of leadership (Goodlad, 1987; Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). Additionally, research on administrative behaviors suggests that leaders of effective schools often exhibit democratic forms of leadership (Blase & Blase, 1994).

In summary, then, the processes of educational leadership are educative when they both educate constituents and are informed by feedback from constituents--when they are conducted as an ongoing exercise of participatory problem-solving. Dewey provided a

theoretical rationale for this condition of educational leadership, and recent research provides evidence to suggest that when school leaders employ participative forms of decision-making, schools are more likely to achieve their educational purposes.

A Promising Precedent

Research suggests that a leadership focus on learning can result in an improvement of learning and that democratic forms of leadership are associated with improved school effectiveness. Do we have research that examines the presence of both of these conditions? In 1932, the Progressive Education Association secured the cooperation of 300 colleges and universities to waive standard admissions requirements and accept students from a sample of 29 secondary schools upon recommendation of the school authorities (Harvard, Haverford, Princeton, and Yale insisted on keeping the College Entrance Board Exams). Educators in the 29 public and private secondary schools explored alternatives to conventional college-prep curriculum and instruction. Curriculum revisions in the participating schools ranged from minor modifications to the academic curriculum (typically in the private schools) to the development of block-time, interdisciplinary, problem-focused courses (usually in the public schools). A follow-up study was conducted of 1475 participating students paired with peers who had completed conventional college preparatory programs. In college, graduates of the Eight-Year Study schools matched or outperformed their peers from conventional programs on virtually every measure, from academic achievement to participation in service activities. The differences between the performance of matched pairs was greatest

among the students who had graduated from the six most "experimental" of the participating schools (Aikin, 1942).

The curriculum reforms enacted by the Eight-Year Study schools achieved the kinds of academic outcomes coveted by policy makers and politicians pushing for school improvement during the late 20th century. Significantly, both of our conditions for making educational leadership genuinely educational were present in the Eight-Year Study schools. First, the schools focused expressly on improving curriculum and instruction--the very purpose of the Study was to unleash schools from restrictive traditions imposed by rigid college entrance requirements so they could judge educational practices not on their prestige, but on their merits. Second, curriculum revisions were embarked upon in as democratic a manner as possible. Under the heading, "Administration Becomes Democratic Leadership," Aikin (1942, p. 33) described how principals fostered teacher, parent, and even student participation in curriculum reconstruction. The details of this kind of leadership were articulated under the heading, "Administration as the Servant of Education" (Giles, et al., 1942, pp. 184-209). Although educational research is not directly transferable from one situation to the next, the Eight-Year Study supplies sufficient evidence to warrant the pursuit of participatory, education-focused school leadership.

Toward Leadership that is Educational

Historically, the fields of educational administration and curriculum and supervision went their separate ways, the latter focusing on the educational mission of the school and democratic forms of leadership, and the former focusing on maintenance of the

institution and top-down forms of management (Callahan & Button, 1964; Pajak, 1993). Recently, the educational leadership field has begun to give increasing credence to the central importance of educational dimensions of the school administrator's work discussed above. During the last two decades, for example, commitment to a managerial focus on the administration of school has begun to yield to a new conception of educational leadership, which abandons top-down decision making in favor of collaborative approaches to problem-solving which recognize the central importance of curriculum and instruction in the life of the school (Mitchell & Cunningham, 1990; Mulkeen, Chambron-McCabe, Anderson, 1994; McCarthy, 1999). Significantly, when the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) mapped the knowledge essential to effective educational leadership, it included among the seven domains "teaching and learning processes" (Hoy, 1994).

While this recognition of "teaching and learning processes" as a domain of educational leadership knowledge is certainly a step toward a more educational conception of school administration, and recognizing that the other six domains are obviously important to the school leaders work, the emphasis on teaching and learning processes as one seventh of a preparation program seems incongruent with the definitive role of such matters in schools. Moreover, in the UCEA materials consideration of curriculum matters are conspicuous by their absence. This oversight is not minor: a school leader can foster teaching excellence in each classroom and implement an effective overall program of instruction but if the curriculum is not worth learning, instructional efforts are for naught. Instructional

strategies with no worthwhile purpose behind them are merely activities. This oversight could reflect the great paradox in the push for national standards that simultaneously calls for a top-down curriculum and local control of schools. In any event, for educational leadership to become truly educational, additional emphasis on curriculum and instruction as domains of administrator knowledge and competency is warranted.

To borrow the title of Gary Wills's (1994) provacative study of leadership, for the educational leadership community, certain trumpets sound. The present moment is clearly a propitious one for enacting substantive and warranted changes in educational leadership preparation and practice. UCEA, AACTE, and other professional education organizations should take the lead by bringing a high profile to a compelling vision of and rationale for truly educational leadership. State agencies and legislative bodies should establish guidelines--even certification requirements--that highlight the educational dimensions of the school leader's work, avoiding, of course, the political hazard of oversimplifying complex realities (such as reducing student learning to standardized test scores). Educational leadership preparation programs should revise their curricula and redirect resources in ways that equip prospective leaders with the capacities to operationalize the two conditions identified above. Through steps like these, we can finally make educational leadership "educational."

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